



May 22, 2018

## SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE TO WELCOME 516 SPELLERS TO COMPETE IN 2018 NATIONAL FINALS

**CINCINNATI** — More than 500 spellers will have a chance to compete for the title of Champion at the 2018 Scripps National Spelling Bee, to be held in National Harbor, Maryland, May 29-31.

This record number of spellers, 516, comes with the introduction of RSVBee, an invitational program that has created more opportunities for champion spellers to compete in the national finals. The Bee invited 238 qualified spellers through RSVBee.

Sponsors of regional bees wrapped up their local events in April, with 278 local champions qualifying for the national finals.

“Bee Week is a special experience that challenges the mind and warms the heart,” said Paige Kimble, executive director of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. “To welcome more spellers than ever to compete exemplifies the evolution of our program and the vast interest from families across the country. With RSVBee, we are leveling the playing field for national finals qualification and providing more opportunities for students to experience all the thrills, friendships and memories that come from the event.”

To qualify for RSVBee, spellers had to win their school spelling bee or be a former national finalist and attend a school enrolled in the Bee program. Parents applied on behalf of their child and paid a \$750 participation fee to accept an invitation.

### **About the 2018 spellers:**

The 516 spellers registered for the 2018 Bee come from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Department of Defense Schools in Europe and eight other countries: the Bahamas, Canada, Ghana, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

The spellers range in age from 8 to 15. For the first time, there are two sets of identical twins competing. A total of 113 spellers have previous experience competing in the national finals. Forty-five spellers have relatives who previously participated in a combined 99 Scripps National Spelling Bees, including Atman Balakrishnan, a sixth-grader from Chicago, whose father, Balu Natarajan, is the 1985 Champion.

### **The Bee on ESPN:**

For the 25th consecutive year, ESPN and its family of channels will provide coverage of the Bee. Onstage spelling follows this schedule (all times Eastern):

Tuesday, May 29:

- Round Two runs from 9:15 a.m. to about 5:20 p.m. (streaming live on the [ESPN App](#)).

Wednesday, May 30:

- Round Three from 8 a.m. to about 5 p.m. (streaming live on the [ESPN App](#)).

The announcement of Finalists is at about 5:10 p.m. (streaming live on the [ESPN App](#)).

Thursday, May 31:

The Finals begin at 10 a.m. and run until about 2 p.m. (watch live on ESPN2; play along on ESPN; and streaming live on the [ESPN App](#)).

After a break, the primetime Finals continue from 8:30-10:30 p.m. (watch live on ESPN; play along on ESPN; and streaming live on the [ESPN App](#)).

**The prizes for the Champion include:**

- \$40,000 cash prize (if co-champs, both winners get \$40,000)
- Engraved trophy
- \$2,500 cash prize and complete reference library from Merriam-Webster
- Reference works and three-year online membership from Encyclopædia Britannica
- Trip to New York City to appear on “Live with Kelly and Ryan,” which airs weekday mornings in national syndication
- Trip to Hollywood to appear on ABC’s “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” which airs weeknights at 11:35 p.m. Eastern/10:35 Central (pending availability)
- A pizza party for the Champion’s school presented by Pizza Hut

**Dr. Seuss’s Word Challenge:**

The Bee is partnering with Random House Children’s Books and Dr. Seuss Enterprises to participate in the first-ever Dr. Seuss’s Word Challenge.

Related events during Bee Week will include a Word-a-Thon for spellers, their families and fans to contribute to the goal of reading 20 million words; a Dr. Seuss-themed spelling bee; and other activities involving the Dr. Seuss Bus that will be on site during Bee Week. For information on the challenge, visit [Seussville.com](#) and register as a participant. Follow along with the zany fun using #SeussWordChallenge.

**About the Scripps National Spelling Bee:**

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is the nation's largest and longest-running educational program. The purpose of the Scripps National Spelling Bee is to help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabularies, learn concepts and develop correct English usage that will help them all their lives. Visit [spellingbee.com](#) for more information about the Scripps National Spelling Bee, which is administered on a not-for-profit basis by The E.W. Scripps Company.

**About Scripps:**

[The E.W. Scripps Company](#) (NYSE: SSP) serves audiences and businesses through a growing portfolio of local and national media brands. With 33 television stations, Scripps is one of the nation’s largest independent TV station owners. Scripps runs an expanding collection of national journalism and content businesses, including [Newsy](#), the next-generation national news network; podcast industry leader [Midroll Media](#); and fast-growing national broadcast networks [Bounce](#), [Grit](#), [Escape](#) and [Laff](#). Scripps produces original programming including “[Pickler & Ben](#),” runs an award-winning investigative reporting newsroom in Washington, D.C., and is the longtime steward of the [Scripps National Spelling Bee](#). Founded in 1878, Scripps has held for decades to the motto, “Give light and the people will find their own way.”

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